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FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1339
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHWN/AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN PRIORITY 2184
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 0922
RUEHGE/AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN PRIORITY 1096
RUEHKG/AMEMBASSY KINGSTON PRIORITY 2888
RUEHPO/AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO PRIORITY 1221
RUEHPU/AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE PRIORITY 4850
RUEHSP/AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN PRIORITY 1922
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA PRIORITY 0201
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUMISTA/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY

S E C R E T SANTO DOMINGO 001353

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STATE FOR WHA/CAR AND INR

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/26/2048
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [SENV](#) [MARR](#) [ETRD](#) [ECON](#) [DR](#)
SUBJECT: FERNANDEZ PLAYS MUSICAL CHAIRS WITH CABINET

REF: A. SANTO DOMINGO 1340

[1](#)B. USDAO IIR 6 827 0228 08/08-21-2008

[1](#)C. SANTO DOMINGO 1189

[1](#)D. TD-314/03112-05/01-19-2005

Classified By: P. Robert Fannin, Ambassador, Reasons 1.4(b), (d)

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) In a series of decrees issued following his August 16 inauguration, President Fernandez shuffled his cabinet; however, many of the officials simply moved from one ministry to another. There was no clear public policy message sent by the personnel moves. Rather, by keeping most of the cabinet positions in the hands of PLD party insiders, particularly those loyal to him personally, Fernandez appears to be keeping an eye on party rival Danilo Medina (Ref A). The demotion of Alejandrina German from Education to Women's Affairs was positive, given the corruption allegations against her. The new Minister of Industry and Commerce, Monchi Fadul, does not inspire much confidence. New Ministers were also named for the Armed Forces, the Presidency, Labor, Tourism, Education, and Youth. In the security and intelligence services, while three potentially seriously problematic appointments were avoided, we have continuing concerns regarding several key officers. For biographic information, see paras. 12-19.

Armed Forces

[1](#)2. (C/NF) The new Minister of the Armed Forces, LTGEN Pedro Pena Antonio, has a very favorable and positive background with U.S. officers in military conference, professional training in the U.S., and USDAO and security assistance venues. He seeks constructive relationships with U.S. officers without losing Dominican integrity and pride or appearing as a doormat or puppet. He favors USG security policies as being best for Dominican security as well. USDAO

assesses that of the several candidates to become Minister, Pena was unquestionably the most favorable to U.S. interests. This is based principally on his attempts to achieve a semblance of security of Dominican airspace and his desire to professionalize the Air Force (see also Ref B).

Security Services

13. (S/NF) In the security services, three potential promotions that prompted serious U.S. concern (Ref C) did not/not take place: Gen. Hector Medina Medina was not appointed Minister of the Armed Forces; Gen. Rafael Bencosme Candelier was not made Chief of Police; and RADM Jose Munoz Moncion was not selected to be Navy Chief of Staff.

14. (S/NF) However, Post has continuing concerns regarding the security services: The President "confirmed" Medina Medina in his current position as the Chief of the Presidential Military Aide's Corps (CAM), where he will continue to have a powerful influence on the President's military decisions (particularly regarding personnel). Munoz Moncion was appointed as Commander of the Las Calderas Navy Base, located in a principal region of drug trafficking activity. Host nation assets based at Las Calderas are the ones which should respond to maritime drug deliveries from South America. Maj. Gen. Manuel Florentino Florentino, an individual with whom Post has serious concerns regarding illegal activity (Ref D), was appointed head of the Frontier Development Directorate, where opportunities for graft related to the Haitian border are significant. At the National Directorate for Intelligence, the cooperative Director Sigfrido Pared Perez has been replaced by Maj. Gen. Ramon Aquino Garcia, whose record is more neutral. On a potentially more positive note, Bencosme Candelier was moved to head the Metropolitan Transport Authority (AMET), where he will presumably have fewer opportunities for nefarious activities.

Industry and Commerce

15. (C) In comments to the Ambassador, an American Chamber of Commerce (AMCHAM) representative noted that the new Minister of Industry and Commerce, Jose Ramon "Monchi" Fadul, has only limited experience in the areas of trade and energy which fall under his portfolio, including overseeing the implementation of CAFTA-DR. The Embassy was not particularly impressed with his performance in his previous position as Labor Minister, where he seemed to be uninformed on important issues. However, Fadul is a loyal party member, which should give him some clout within the Administration.

Presidency

16. (C) As Minister of the Presidency, Cesar Pina Toribio will fulfill a role similar to Chief of Staff in the U.S. system. USAID worked with Pina in his previous positions, and describes him as an ally of U.S. programming for the justice sector. He has played a key role in the implementation of the criminal procedures code. Some analysts portrayed Fernandez's choice of Pina as one designed to avoid having at his right hand a person who himself aspires to the presidency.

Labor

17. (C) The new Minister of Labor, Maximiliano Puig Miller, is the leader of the leftist Alliance for Democracy Party and the only non-PLD party member in the new cabinet. Puig was dropped from his position as Minister of Environment in 2007 after making public allegations of corruption against the Senate. He is expected to play an important role not only in

implementing the labor provisions of CAFTA-DR, but also in the running of the new state-run health care system. In comments to the Ambassador, an AMCHAM representative described Puig as a better officer than his predecessor, the new Minister of Industry and Commerce Fadul.

Tourism

18. (C) Minister of Tourism Francisco Javier Garcia Fernandez, another political loyalist, is being rewarded for his role as campaign manager for the President's re-election campaign.

Minister of Tourism is seen by many Dominicans to be a lucrative position. During his time as Minister of Industry and Commerce, Garcia supported transportation interests that opposed a U.S. company's right to implement new contracts, which almost derailed the entry into force of CAFTA-DR. An AMCHAM representative told the Ambassador that he was not particularly impressed with Garcia's prior service in the Industry and Commerce Ministry.

Education

19. (C) Minister of Education Melanio Paredes has extensive experience in the education sector, having taught at two Universities in Santo Domingo (UNIBE and UTESA). During his time as a congressman (1990-1994) he was chairman of the Education Committee, and earlier he served as the General Secretary of the Labor Union for teachers. In his previous position as Minister of Industry and Commerce, the Embassy found him to be an easy going person who is open, accessible, and responsive. Post is pleased to see his predecessor,

Alejandrina German, gone from the ministry. She was the subject of multiple corruption allegations, including a case involving a company tied to her daughter which allegedly sold millions of dollars worth of nutritionally deficient school lunches to the government.

Women

110. (SBU) Alejandrina German was demoted, but remains in the cabinet as Minister of Women's Affairs. During the first part of her term at the Education Ministry, German's relationship with USAID was challenging. Over time these challenges turned into opportunities and the relationship improved significantly. German was eventually responsive to our request for coordination and recognized USAID as an important partner. She has been an advocate in expanding USAID's Regional Centers of Education for Teacher Training and has committed the Ministry's own resources in the expansion.

Youth

111. (U) The new Minister of Youth, Franklin Rodriguez, is a lawyer and journalist. Born in 1979, he is an alumnus of the State Department-sponsored National Democracy Institute Leadership Program. Mr. Rodriguez is the youngest member of the Central Committee of the PLD and was the coordinator of the PLD youth campaign. He has also served as vice-president of the Dominican Student Federation.

Biographic Information

112. (S/NF) Minister of Armed Forces Maj. Gen. Pedro Rafael PENA Antonio

- Air Force Chief of Staff (2006-2008)
- Described as intelligent and outspoken, as well as pro-U.S. and friendly with U.S. officials
- Helicopter pilot with search and rescue experience; personal pilot to President in Fernandez's first term
- Prior service as Assistant Military Attache in Washington, Air Force Comptroller, Inspector General, and Vice Chief of Staff
- Degree in human resources management

13. (U) Minister of Industry and Commerce Jose Ramon "Monchi" FADUL

- Minister of Labor (2004-2008)
- Member of the PLD's Political Committee
- Influential in Santiago, where he was mayor (1990-1994) and congressional representative (1982-1986, 1994-2002)
- Former Director of the Dominican Corporation of State

Enterprises

14. (U) Minister of Presidency Cesar PINA Toribio

- Presidential Legal Adviser (1996-1999 and 2004-2008)
- Attorney General (1999-2000)
- Member of his family's law firm since receiving his doctorate from UASD in 1970
- Taught law at PUCMM, UNIBE, and UASD, focusing primarily on criminal law and criminal procedure
- Member of the PLD Party's Central Committee

15. (U) Minister of Labor Maximiliano PUIG Miller

- Minister of Environment (2004-2007)
- National Coordinator for the Lome IV Accord, with rank of Minister (1996-2000)
- Served as Senator (1990-1994), at first with PLD, then when that party suffered split in 1992, Puig and ten deputies resigned from PLD to set up ADP party (ADP was in coalition with PLD in 2008 election and prior).
- Studied sociology and public law at the University of Paris and received his PhD in Political Science there in 1970
- Taught sociology at UASD (1971-1992)

16. (U) Minister of Tourism Francisco Javier GARCIA Fernandez

- National Campaign Manager for Leonel Fernandez for President (2007-2008)
- Minister of Industry and Commerce (2004-2007)
- During the first Fernandez administration (1996-2000) served as general manager for national lottery, president of state-owned oil refinery, and executive director of port authority
- Member of the Central and Political Committees of the PLD
- In private sector, worked as real estate developer

¶17. (U) Minister of Education Melanio A. PAREDES Pinales

- Minister of Industry and Commerce (2007-2008)
- Director General, National Institute for Technical and Professional Training (2004-2007)
- Executive Director for Airports (1999)
- Professor, UNIBE and UTESA
- Congressman for San Cristobal (1990-1994)
- Physics degree, UASD

¶18. (U) Minister of Women's Affairs Alejandrina GERMAN

- Minister of Education (2004-2008)
- Minister of Presidency (1999-2000)
- Director, Higher Education Council (1996-2000)
- Member of PLD party Political Committee

¶19. (U) Minister of Youth Franklin RODRIGUEZ

- President, PLD party youth wing
- Alumnus of the State Department sponsored National Democracy Institute Leadership Program
- Member of Central Committee of PLD
- Former vice-president of Dominican Student Federation (FED)
- Born 1979 in San Cristobal

(U) Please visit us at
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/wha/santodomingo/>
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